



Shelburne Farms  
**Project Seasons**  
for Early Learners

# Cultivating Joy & Wonder

EDUCATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH NATURE, FOOD, & COMMUNITY



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THROUGH NATURE, FOOD, & COMMUNITY

written by **Emily Hoyler & Linda Wellings**  
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Shelburne Farms **Project Seasons** for Early Learners

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The A.D. Henderson Foundation



## Shelburne Farms

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Shelburne Farms is a nonprofit education center, 1,400-acre working farm, and National Historic Landmark located in Vermont's Champlain Valley. The Farm's mission is to cultivate a conservation ethic for a sustainable future by practicing the stewardship of natural, agricultural, and cultural resources and educating young people to become ecologically literate and caring citizens who make choices that create a healthy and just world.

Shelburne Farms Board (April 2013): Sharmy Altshuler, Julia Alvarez, Bob Baird, Fred Bay, Binta Colley,  
Mary Jane Gentry, David Hollenbeck, Will Jackson, Nan Jenks-Jay, Steve Johnson, David Marvin,  
Andrew Meyer, Casey Murrow, Ernie Pomerleau, Lisa Steele, Charlotte Stetson, Lola Van Wagenen, Alec Webb



**“If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.”**

— *Rachel Carson, “The Sense of Wonder”*









## This book is dedicated to:

**Virginia (Puddy) Davis** (1917-1997), who planted the seed for our early childhood programs by launching a weekly story-time hour with two community volunteers. Little did we know how that seed would take root and grow.

**Linda Wellings**, our extraordinary “facilitator of wonder,” who has been the heart and soul of the early childhood programs at the Farm. Her infectious joy for life, talent for educating, and powerful love for all children is a lasting gift and inspiration for all who spend time with “Ms. Linda.”







# Acknowledgements

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*Cultivating Joy and Wonder* is the culmination of Shelburne Farms' experiences in early childhood learning on the Farm and in our community. This resource represents two decades of working with thousands of young learners who have taught us so much about the lifelong impact of learning firsthand through the natural world, agriculture and the community. We are deeply indebted to all who have shared their gifts of teaching and their love of children and the land. We are honored to share their work with other educators.

In particular, we thank our Shelburne Farms education staff (1992-2013), who have all played a role in developing our early childhood programs: Anne Bijur, Ethan Bodin, Lissa Bogner, Peter Bullock, Margaret Burke, Jen Cairns, Rachael Cadwallader-Staub, Donald Campbell, Anne Campbell, Amy Chambers, Jen Cirillo, Bethany Corson, Erica Curry, Keely Deutsch, Matt Dubel, Judy Elson, Josh Hahn, Joan Haley, Angela McGregor Hedstrom, Dana Hudson, Sarah Kadden, Suzy Kneeland, Sally Lincoln, Johanna Liskowsky-Doak, Christine Lutters, Susie Marchand, Tre McCarney, Christie Nold, Kim Norris, Deb Parrella, Danielle Pipher, Amy Powers, Lori Sanders, Sonya Sapir, Sam Smith, Pat Straughan, Tiffany Tillman, Laura Viani, Caroline Warner, Reina Warren, Cat Wright, and Erica Zimmerman. These educators, in turn, could not have done their work without the support of many Work and Learn interns and apprentices, who carry the work forward and outward into the world.

Special thanks go to the staff who helped this particular resource take shape over the last two years. Tiffany Tillman helped facilitate important staff conversation on our education philosophy and pedagogy and provided the framework for Education for Sustainability for early learners. Susie Marchand infused her passion and deep understanding of agriculture to the project and contributed many of the activities that she has developed over two decades of creatively connecting learners to food and farming at Shelburne Farms. Sarah Kadden brought a lens of sustainability to our work and offered endless encouragement and support along the way. Christine Lutters has played a steadfast leadership role in our Adventures programs for twelve years. The incredible "production" team of Emily Hoyler, Linda Wellings and Holly Brough was able to weave together all the ideas of this resource to make it a reality!

A heartfelt thanks to all of the children, parents, childcare givers, and educators who have participated in our Adventures preschool program, summer camps, field trips to the farmyard, and family programs over the last twenty years. We have learned so much from you.

Final thanks to our partners at the Burlington School District and the King Street Youth Center who have provided both the inspiration and the synergistic learning opportunity for developing so many of the insights, activities, and stories shared in this resource.



**Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes**, a Pre-K through grade 5 public school for 230 students which is located in Burlington, Vermont's Old North End, a vibrant community

just north of downtown, home to a racially and socioeconomically diverse community that includes many of the city's Refugee Resettlement Community. In 2004, Shelburne Farms began working closely with the faculty, staff, students, and families of the school on curriculum development, campus ecology and practice, and building community partnerships. In 2009, we officially became the school's strategic partner as it transitioned from a neighborhood school to an Education for Sustainability-themed magnet school. <http://sa.bsdt.org>



















**The King Street Center**, a Burlington, Vermont-based nonprofit community organization that provides children and families the core life-building skills necessary for a healthy and productive future. Its programs develop the fortitude needed to succeed at home, in school, and in life. Their whole-person approach to youth development embraces the entire family, neighborhood, and community. For 18 years, the preschool program has visited the Farm for Friday mornings throughout the school year and for a week in the summer. The Shelburne Farms partnership gives King Street children a chance to play and learn outdoors on green meadows, in leafy woodlands, and with silly chickens—building their connections to the natural world. [www.kingstreetcenter.org](http://www.kingstreetcenter.org)



**Champlain Valley Head Start (CVHS)**, offers center-based and home-based services to eligible children and families throughout Franklin, Grand Isle, Chittenden and Addison Counties. Its mission is to provide high quality services to help children and families thrive and reach their full potential. CVHS believes in the truth of the old adage, "It takes a village to raise a child," and it builds strong collaborative partnerships by blending staffing and resources with other community service providers. Both the King Street Center and the Burlington School District's early childhood programs benefit from integrated programming with the federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start offered by CVHS.

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